

COMIC SHOP NEWS

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Demon™ & ©1992 DC Comics, A.R.R.

THE DEMON

Alpha Flight #106, the issue in which Northstar confirms that he is gay, drew an incredible amount of attention from the news media; it was featured in **Entertainment Tonight**, CNN, CBS, NBC, ABC, and in major newspapers across the country. The only problem is, no one knew that the book was going to elicit such strong news interest, so no extra steps were taken to make sure that copies were available to satisfy the sudden, incredible demand for the book...

Marvel couldn't magically make more copies appear on the day of release, but they've done the next-best thing: they're doing a second printing of **Alpha Flight #106** that should be on the stands at about the same time you read this. If you missed out the first time around, here's your chance to read the comic that has everyone talking.

Demon Features a Wagnerian Epic

If Jack Kirby is the Demon's father figure, then Matt Wagner must serve the role of a kindly uncle. Of course Kirby created the Demon, but it was Wagner who helped revitalize the character in the 1985-87 **Demon Miniseries**. Of course, that version of the Demon, inspired by the Alan Moore-written Demon appearances in *Swamp Thing*, led to the current interpretation of the Demon seen each month in his own title.



Alpha Flight © 1992 DC Comics

by Kim B. Pearson

Jack Kirby is no longer actively working in the comics field, so DC can't entice him to return to **The Demon**—but Matt Wagner is, and DC did. His entire Demon performance can be seen in **Demon #22**, a special one-shot issue both written and illustrated by Wagner.

In this issue, Ehrlich finds himself caught in the middle of a power struggle between the voodoo witch Annie Mojo and the upstart sorceress Sybel

Hayden. Each hopes to use the Demon to prove that she is more powerful than her adversary—but they haven't considered the fact that the Demon is not a very cooperative pawn, and he has some pretty malevolent plans of his own for the two witches who have manipulated him.

Demon #22, a \$1.50 comic, is scheduled for February 20th release.

by Kim B. Pearson

It's All In the Cards For Impel

In the next few weeks, comic fans will be transformed into card collectors when Impel releases two series of comic-oriented collectors cards, their **DC Cosmic Cards** (featuring 180 cards and ten specially designed Hologram Hall of Fame Cards) and their **X-Men Card** series (featuring a hundred card series and five foil-tail holograms). Impel recently previewed both series at a comic convention and the reaction was overwhelming.

The **DC Cosmic Cards** feature 130 different comic book characters and are sub-divided into eight categories: Hero Heritage (21 cards), Villain Heritage (9 cards), Earth's Mightiest Heroes (48 cards), Earth's Mightiest Villains (33 cards), Heroes From Beyond (14 cards), Villains From Beyond (16 cards), Great Battles (27 cards), Classic Covers (10 cards), and two checklist cards, along with ten holograms. Impel is certainly pleased to offer **DC Cosmic Cards** to the millions of DC Comics fans, John Bramblett, Marketing Manager at Impel, said, "DC Cosmic Cards offer a new way for these fans—as well as the rapidly growing number of fans of comic cards—to enjoy and connect with their favorite character from DC Comics."

The hundred-card **X-Men Card** set features all-new artwork by fan-favorite illustrator Jim Lee.

The set includes 40 Super-Heroes cards, 50 Villains cards, 10 Teams cards, 5 All-Enemies Cards, 6 Ex-X-Men cards, 6 Action Holograms, a 9-card picture puzzle of the Danger Room, and a checklist card. Card backs include a Cerebro Scan featuring vital statistics and power ratings, as well as background information and an "X-tra" fact.

George White of Impel was quick to point out that the **X-Men Card** series is not the long-rumored **Marvel Universe Series II**—but that the third Marvel series is indeed in production. "Impel will release a third Marvel series at the end of May," White said. "It will be the same twelve-card-per-pack format as the first two Marvel series. As you know, the X-Men cards have fewer cards per pack."

"The third Marvel series will be a bigger series—two hundred cards. We've discovered that it's easier to print these cards in quantities of fifty. The DC set was far enough along that we left it at 180 cards, but the X-Men card is a hundred-card series. From here on, we'll work with multiples of fifty if at all possible. There will also be five limited-edition holograms."

White is aware that many fans have had more trouble building a complete set of the second series of Marvel holograms, and Impel is addressing the problem. "Impel produced the same amount of holograms for Marvel I as there were for Marvel II; however, we have heard that some of the early cases that went out didn't have as many holograms," White said. "We're correcting that this time to make sure there's an equitable distribution."

White points out that the

ing on it. We're also working on a new **Star Trek** series, which will be a series dedicated solely to the **Next Generation**; it will come out at the end of the summer.

"We're also planning to introduce a second series of Disney and a second series of **Minnie and Me**. It remains to be seen if there will be a hologram in those series or if there will be some other sort of specialty card. Those are scheduled for August.

"Impel had Archie cards in the Hall of Trading Card Treats, along with Marvel, Universal Monsters, Nintendo, and Inspector Gadget. We're talking with Archie about having an Archie set; we can't say anything yet other than that."

With holograms and special cards proving to be so collectible, Impel is as aware as everyone else of the extraordinary lengths to which some fans will go to find the hologram packs. Previously, the holograms were extra cards packed at the end of a pack, so many fans either "side-stacked" card packs to find thicker packs or they tore a small hole in the pack to see if there was a hologram underneath the plastic wrap. To give fans who didn't resort to such tactics a chance, Impel has altered the way it packs its cards.

"There were various ways that people were figuring out where the holograms were, so we've been trying to stay a step ahead—which isn't easy to do," White said.

"Right now, the packs are wrapped so that you can't see through them, the number of cards is reduced by one if the pack contains a hologram—if it's a twelve-card pack, the pack with a hologram in it will have one card removed and a hologram inserted so that it's the same thickness as any other pack—and the hologram will be inserted in the middle so that no one can scratch or tear the top or bottom of the pack to see if there's a hologram in there. We heard about all sorts of methods that some people used to find holograms, and we've tried to develop the most foolproof system possible."

While comic-related cards are very strong sellers for Impel, they're still justifiably proud of their sports series, all of which are strong sellers in the sports-card market. "The **NBA Hoops** and **Skybox** lines are out again this year and will be out again next year; those are the flagship of the company, since they were our first product and sort of 'put us on the map,' so to speak," White said. "This year we came out with **NFL Pro-Line**, and we have two premium NFL lines planned for this coming fall; we have a minor league baseball card series called **Line Drive**, a pre-rookie card that will be out this spring and summer; and we have a line of **Olympic Cards**. Right now there's a Hall of Fame series out, and we'll be putting out a winter sub and a summer set."

by Cliff Biggers

COMIC SHOP NEWS

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From:

A Comics Specialty Outlet

100% RECYCLED
NEWSPRINT

RECYCLE IT AGAIN!



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What's Up? Doc!

In the last couple of months, Graffiti Designs has offered Doc Savage fans a chance to order two great collectibles: a Doc Savage bronze bust and a Doc Savage metal pin. In April, though, they offer one collectible that no long-time Doc Savage fan will be able to resist: a limited edition print of James Barnes's cover painting for **Doc Savage: The Phantom City**. This high-quality lithograph is taken from Bama's March 1966 cover for the Bantam paperback that reprinted the December 1933 Doc Savage adventure; the art is reproduced without logo or text.

Doc Savage fans admired Bama's work on the covers of the Bantam series in the 1960's and the 1970's; since then, Bama has gone on to become one of the most highly-collected Western artists working today (even when he did the Doc Savage books, he often said that as much as he liked those paintings, his most favorite paintings of the time were his Western covers for Marshall McCoy's Nevada Jim series), and many of his limited edition lithographs demand thousands of dollars on the collectible market. Graffiti will be offering **Doc Savage: The Phantom City** in a standard high-quality unsigned 1500 copy edition for \$29.95 and in a 100-copy limited signed edition for \$125. Be sure to let your local comic shop know that you're interested so that you don't miss out on this opportunity to admire a Doc Savage painting reproduced in the detailed quality that Bama's work deserves!

Cancel the Acetate Cage!...

Bummer... For the past couple of months, **CN** has enthusiastically reported on Marvel's plans to produce an acetate cover for the first issue of the new **Cage** series. Well, forget all that; according to Marvel Comics, in spite of their best efforts, it became clear that they just were not going to be able to overcome production difficulties that made it impossible for them to produce sufficient acceptable copies of the acetate-overlays cover to meet the very high demand for the book. As a result, **Cage** #1 will have a lower cover price—\$1.50—and will, according to David Checkle of Diamond Comics Distributors, have a gold metallic ink cover instead of a standard cover. So does this mean that Continuity Comics, who first announced an acetate overlay cover for **CyberRad** #6 (not yet released), will be the first company to publish such a cover? Yes—provided that the production problems don't make them abandon their plans, too...



Doc Savage © 1992 Graffiti Designs Inc.
Bantam Books © 1966 Simon & Schuster Inc.

Fright Night Sees Light of Day Again

Fright Night, the comic book series based on a pair of horror-adventure films that united teenagers and a television horror show host to do battle with a bevy of beasts and vampires, returns to the comic racks this spring in a new 3-D comic book-sized special. Now's **Fright Night 3-D Special** #1, written by Tony Caputo and illustrated by Neil Vokes and David Mowry, features 64 pages of what Now describes as "psychedelic creams, psychedelic movies, and psychedelic death!" Each issue includes free 3-D glasses. **Fright Night 3-D Special** #1, a \$2.95 comic, is scheduled for April release.

The Brave and the Bolland

When **Wonder Woman** #63 appears on the stands in mid-April, ending the several-month hiatus for the title, it'll certainly be an eye-catching return, thanks in large part to the stunning cover art by Brian Bolland. Bolland has signed on as the regular cover artist for **Wonder Woman**, joining the creative team of writer William Messner-Loebs and artists Jill Thompson and Romeo Tanghal. **Wonder Woman** #63 will feature the final part to the tale begun in March's **Wonder Woman Special** #1, in which Deathstroke the Terminator must help free Wonder Woman from her captivity at the hands of the evil dictator of Balgravia. Look for **Wonder Woman** #63, a \$1.25 comic, on April 15th.

The Aliens' Colorful Past

Some of the rarest Aliens storylines are those that appeared in **Dark Horse Presents**, the print-run on those books was generally much smaller than the print-run on the various Aliens miniseries, and none of them went into second printings as the miniseries did. To make these elusive Aliens tales available to the many fans of the easier-to-find Aliens series, Dark Horse intends to collect them all into a single prestige-format book in mid-April—and to make them attractive to fans who might already have them in their black-and-white versions, Dark Horse is, for the first time, adding color to these live tales.

Dark Horse Presents: Aliens includes the Aliens stories from **Dark Horse Presents** #24 (by Mark Verheiden and Mark Nelson); **Dark Horse Presents** #42 & 43 (by Anna Bannett and Paul Gunan); **Dark Horse Presents: Fifth Anniversary Special** (by John Arcudi and Simon Bisley); and from **Dark Horse Presents** #56 (by John Arcudi, Paul Gunan, and Tony Akins). Dark Horse regulars Rachelle Menashe and Chris Chaloner supply the color for all the stories, while Simon Bisley has painted the new cover for the volume. Priced at \$4.95, **Dark Horse Presents: Aliens** #1 is a perfect complement to the various Dark Horse **Aliens** trade paperbacks and hardcovers (now, when are they going to add color to the first Verheiden-Nelson limited series, which is currently the only **Aliens** material still available only in black-and-white?).



A God!/With The
MIGHTY~Power of The
MIGHTY THUNDERBOLT
At My Fingertips!



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QUICKSHOTS

Dig the Hole Story

Some gags are too good to be used just once. Fearless Fosdick was just such a gag. Introduced in **LIT Abner**, Frank Dick Tracy, Fosdick makes Lt. Frank Drebin look like Joe Friday. His first trade paperback from Kitchen Sink was such a hit that it had to go to a second printing—so you knew that a second Fearless Fosdick collection was a sure thing, right?

Fearless Fosdick: The Hole Story, Kitchen Sink's second collection of five Al Capp Fosdick stories, including 'Fosdick and Hyde' and 'Ezio the Pincher.' Since Fosdick had an amazing ability to get more than adequately ventilated with lead in the course of his adventures, Kitchen Sink is adding die-cut bullet holes to the cover of this volume in tribute to Fosdick's hole-ier than thou attitude.

Fearless Fosdick: The Hole Story, a 128-page trade paperback scheduled for March release, is priced at \$11.95. At the same time, Kitchen Sink will be reissuing their first Fosdick volume, **Fearless Fosdick** (\$11.95), and their **Fosdick T-Shirt** (\$13.95), making it easier than ever for you to join Fosdick's holey crew.



Long Farewells

As **csw** told you last month, DC's initial plan was to release all ten of its Farewell Editions simultaneously on February 20th. However, response has been so strong for these books that DC is afraid that fans on a budget won't be able to afford all ten books in the same week. As a result, the first four book (**Action Comics** #252; **Detective** #1225; **Showcase** #22, and **Sugar & Spike** #99) will be released on February 20th; a week later, DC will release **Adventure** #247; **Brave & Bold** #28; and **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** #76; and finally on March 5th, fans can enjoy new facsimile editions of **Detective** #327; **House of Secrets** #92; and **Showcase** #4. Each of these key Silver Age facsimile editions will contain new text material as well, and each is bargain priced at \$1.00.



Demon #23...

It's About Tim!....

The first issue of **Night of the Living Deadline USA** features some pretty wide-ranging guest-stars—but Robin? That's right: Tim Drake is scheduled to appear in **Demon** #23, the first installment of a two part story, "The Return of the Howler." The Demon and Jason Blood agree to work together to battle werewolves terrorizing Gotham City—and as you might expect, their path seems to be on a collision course with Robin. The Demon can't decide whether Robin is a partner or dinner, though... **Demon** #23 is written by Alan Grant and illustrated by Val Semeiks; look for it on March 26th.

The first issue of **Night of the Living Deadline USA** features Richard Salas' 13 O'Clock, Peter Milligan and Brett Ewins' Johnny Doe, Nemo, Ho Che Anderson's Doe, Shaky Knees A-Men, and more by Julie Hollings, Philip Bond, Alec Stevens, D'Israeli, Mitch O'Connell, and others. **Night of the Living Deadline USA**, a no-ads 48-page monthly series intended for mature readers, debuts in late April.

Trust can take a hint. Pretend it never happened!

And so we have **Night of the Living Deadline USA** #1, a new, much more affordable book that features 48 pages of story and art for only \$2.95. The cutting-edge content of the book remains the same but you get fewer pages for a lot less money (half the pages, but less than a third of the cost—wotta bargain!).



Dawn of the Deadline

Did you pass on Dark Horse's **Deadline USA** series because it was too expensive for your budget? Well, Dark Horse is all too aware of how common that decision was. "Ten bucks for a lousy comic book? They ask in their latest press release. "What were we thinking? Anyway, the ultra-suave Dark Horse brain

but they're certainly as stressful. One cop is a veteran; the other is a rookie who comes from a family of cops. The two end up with an intense assignment: to track down a serial killer who is dismembering his victims. The stress of the job infringes into their personal lives as well, and the four-issue series shows both the professional and the private side of two police officers who can't help but get emotionally involved with their job.

Cops: The Job, a four-issue limited series from Marvel, focuses on two police officers whose lives may not be as glamorous as a superhero's—

ten by Joe Jusko and Larry Hama; since Jusko (well known to fans for his paintings for Marvel covers and posters) was a police officer, he brings a touch of reality to the series. Mike Harris and Jim Palomotti, who have previously illustrated **The Punisher**, are the artists for the series; Mike Golden supplies all four cover illustrations.

Cops: The Job #1, a \$1.25 comic, is scheduled for April 9th release.



HARVEY THE HILLBILLY BASTARD HAS HIS OWN COMIC BOOK AND TRAILER TRASH IS IT!

You've witnessed this reprehensible character tumbling his way through short stories in titles like **Buzz** and **SNAKE EYES**—He'll even been in **SCREW**!! Now behold Harvey and a cast of rednecks, losers and geeks in the first issue of **Trailer Trash**. Roy Tompkins delivers the goods in outrageous humor and art and Tundra has the nerve to publish it. So try it already!

Trailer Trash #1 available April, subsequent issues quarterly



\$2.00 U.S.



Give & Take by Cliff Biggers & Brett Brooks

Each month, Cliff Biggers (in plain type) and Brett Brooks (in italic type) take a look at a few choice comics scheduled for release within the next month. Publishers interested in having their books considered for review should send copies to CSN Give and Take, 2339 Millstead Circle, Marietta GA 30066. We'd prefer receiving copies of the books at least thirty days before they're supposed to reach comic shops. Enough business; now let's talk comics.

I've been discussing certain comic book trends with people lately, and one of the most commonly discussed trends is the tendency of the people who create comics today to go back to the comics they grew up with for inspiration. That's why we see reprints of comics from the sixties in the eighties and that's why we're getting reprints of the seventies in the nineties. First was the *Ghost Rider*, and then *Nova* and the *New Warriors*, and now it's *Luke Cage's turn*.

It's funny that you should mention this; I said almost exactly the same thing in an article about this book (an article that hasn't seen print at the time that we're writing this, of course). Perhaps those who say that the "Golden Age of Comics is twelve" are correct...

On of the best things about the reprints though, is that certain things can be updated. Don't call *Luke Cage Power Man* anymore—his name is *Cage*, and coincidentally, so is the title of his new monthly series from Marvel. The first issue of *Cage* is pretty much a set-up issue. Writer Marc McLarion wants to make sure that everyone is aware that this is not the same character that he once was—this *Luke Cage* is very different. Oh, he's still the Hero-For-Hire, but he is no longer the token super-hero.

In the original series, it seemed as though the main reason that the book was being done was so that there could be a main line book on the market that featured a black title character. Luke wasn't actually alone in that category, but he was probably the most stereotyped of them all—and that is what McLarion seems to be trying to head away from. *Luke Cage* is now a more powerful figure of respect; he has a life and an identity, and he doesn't want to lose any of that by going back to a time when he was "Power Man." Cage is a man who is tired of living in the past, but willing to do his share to make an honest dollar.

Did you ever read old issues of *The Teen Titans*? The book tried so hard to present what the writers thought was a teenage point of view—but what the books actually presented was a Frankie-and-Annette version of teenagehood. Well, that's pretty much the way the original *Luke Cage* seemed to me; it was really filtered through a number of exploitation films. The new book manages to break away from those stereotypes, much to my relief.

*The art on Cage is done by the team of Dwayne Turner and Chris Imy. You may remember Turner's work from the recent *Black Panther* limited series, but that doesn't mean that you've seen everything that he is capable of. The art team on *Cage* has produced some desirably good work. At first, when you read the story, the art seems like the perfect medium to convey the story—it doesn't overpower or get lost in the action. Then, as you look over the book for a second time, or even closely the first time through, you can see the amount of detail, and the meticulous work that has gone into crafting this book. The art is truly magnificent. There are two books on the market that have the strength of storytelling of *Cage*.*

Turner's work here has an undercurrent of Gil Kane that is very flattering. If you're going to draw influences from any action/adventure artist, Kane is one of the three best. The result is a very fluid, very dynamic page that is visually exciting—a quality that eludes far too many artists.

Yet, even artistically, you can't escape the feeling of redefinition. The other major sevensescent revitalizations—*Ghost Rider* and *Nano*—both have maintained the look that they had at the time. *The feeling of nostalgia* has kept those characters in their original outfits. *Cage*, however, looks nothing like he once did; no longer do we see a man dressed in a yellow shirt wearing a silver headband and a chain around his waist—in fact, the first issue of *Cage* has Luke ripping a vaguely familiar piece of cloth and chain apart. Cage is now dressed like a person—oh, person with steel socks and a steel belt, but still more like a person than before—and that too seems to give him a stronger sense of identity.

Good point; why would a character who is, in effect, a bodyguard/private investigator feel the urge to wear a "costume" to begin with? His current outfit seems functional and believable (okay, maybe we could have done without a steel belt—but you have to make some allowances for comics' affinity for costuming).

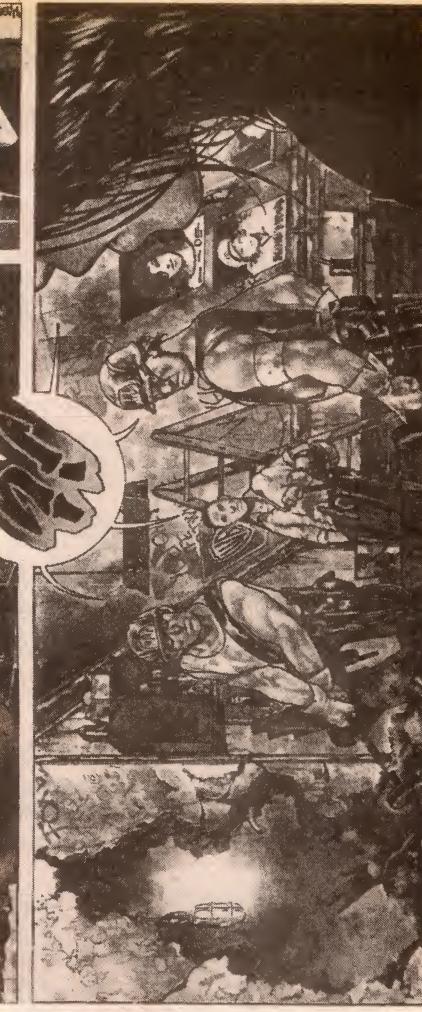


Margot



Tarzan

©1992 Marvel Comics



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tunes, don't you?) and functional—I wonder how many superheroes have, at times, wished they had worn tread-boots instead of stick boots? "I have to admit, the only time I ever liked Luke Cage was when he was tamed with Iron Fist (which is another character who seems to be enjoying a new life), and then only at times, but the new Cage seems to offer more promise. His beginning is a much stronger one than I ever expected. Still, it's hard to believe this is the same person I once read about—I mean, he doesn't shout 'Christmas' once..."

Too much admiration can be creatively detrimental. I'm convinced that problem has, in part, plagued many previous attempts to bring Tarzan to comic books. So many comic book creators have grown up on Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan adventures that, faced with the challenge of writing new adventures of ERB's most famous character, they slavishly follow the Burroughs pattern note for note, adding no new riffs of their own, no new variations on a theme. Their intent may be to pay homage to Burroughs and Tarzan, but their end result is also, ultimately, boring. I have no doubts at all that Mark Wheatley avoids fully though, he doesn't freeze at the thought of bringing Tarzan into the 1990's in Malibu Comics' new Tarzan series. Rather than aping (pun semi-intended) ERB's style, Wheatley captures the essentials of the characterization and pacing and adds to his own strong sense of plotting.

If you have ever read Burroughs' books, you know that Burroughs was, in many ways, a cinematic writer. He favored multiple plot-strings that seemed totally unrelated, and he cut from one to another at regular intervals. By the end of his novel, he brought these unrelated plotstrings and their unrelated characters together, weaving the plotstrings into a sturdy story that had no loose ends.

Wheatley also weaves multiple plotstrings into a taut, suspenseful storyline—and if anything, his pacing is even more rapid-fire than Burroughs. The action moves forward at a clip rarely seen this side of Japanese manga, pulling the reader along with it.

It's strange that you should mention manga—because that is exactly what I thought of as I read this series. It



AUGUSTUS!
FREE WILMARHT!

I'M GOING
AFTER NOYES!



Shadownan

H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu

THE COMING OF THE CRUSADERS



ENEMY ACE & LOBO * *ARMAGEDDON INFERNO* * FLASH
ARMAGEDDON INFERNO * GUNNER & SARGE & POOCH
 GUY GARDNER * *INFERNO* * SUPERMAN
 MARTIAN MANHUNTER & TROIA * *INFERNO*
 SGT. ROCK * *INFERNO* * JOHNNY CLOUD & FLASH & TROIA
 * ORION & LOBO * *INFERNO* * BATMAN
INFERNO * HAWKMAN & HAWKWOMAN
 STARFIRE & GUY GARDNER * *INFERNO**
 POWER GIRL * *INFERNO* * FIRESTORM *
INFERNO * CREEPER & JO NAH OF THE LEGION
 WONDER WOMAN * *INFERNO* * FLASH
 GUY GARDNER * *INFERNO* * SPECTRE *
 MARTIAN MANHUNTER & TROIA * *INFERNO*
 OSSTRANDER * GIORDANO * McDONNELL

Shield #10
Fly #9
Comet #10
Jaguar #10
Shield #11
Web #9

IMPACT COMICS



feels as though this rendition of Tarzan could just as easily be the Japanese manga edition as anything else. Everything from Wheatley's story to the manga-inspired art style to the point in direction, yet it never becomes overpowering or derivative.

Wheatley's Tarzan is a man torn between two worlds: the jungle of his past and the modern world of his present. He sees the cruelty of both, and he serves as a catalyst in each. In the first issue of *Tarzan*, he is hurtled into a third world, an alien world that seems destined to destroy Tarzan's homeworld unless he can prevent it from happening. Wheatley doesn't feel the need to reveal Tarzan's origins, to set his exploits in an outmoded, stereotypical Africa that no longer exists; he has bigger tales to tell.

It's that dual nature of Tarzan that makes this series so compelling to me. You're never quite sure what Tarzan is thinking at any time—never quite sure when the beast may rise to claim him back. This has a great deal to do with the manner in which Wheatley has chosen to tell the story—through the eyes of Lord Greystoke's wife, Jane. Jane knows the dangers that she is facing by accompanying her husband—and what's more she revels in them! You talk about how her rendition of Tarzan is non-traditional, but I feel just as strongly about Jane. She is his voice through much of the story, and she is our guide to the world in which they live and it is through her that we begin to understand both; she sees both sides Tarzan lives in, and she has lived in both with him. There is a hint of fear in her voice when she speaks of the beast that is Tarzan, but there is an equal amount of respect, and it is those feelings that are conveyed to the reader and create the image of Tarzan.

Good point, so many fans of the Tarzan films are totally unaware that Jane had any sort of a personality. It's nice to see that she serves some function other than hostage and sidekick.

Artist Neil Vokes and Marc Hempel are a much more dynamic combination than I ever would have expected; when I first heard they were illustrating Tarzan, I was afraid their work would have a cartoon quality. It doesn't; instead, their Tarzan has a visual quality unlike any comic book Tarzan before them, a dynamic fluid look at times reminiscent of Gil Kane and P. Craig Russell. Their storytelling here is excellent; having seen the book both with and without lettering, I can see just how well the pictures carry the story along. While it might be tempting to just admire the art, I urge you to read the text as well; you'll be glad you did.

One other thing, having seen the book in both color and black-and-white, I am surprised at how strongly the book works in both mediums. The most amazing thing seems to be the way that the book almost seems designed for color. Too many artists become lazy and decide that a piece of art is going to get carried by the color, but that isn't true here—this book works equally well in both forms, but seems like it was designed for color. The color does exactly what it is supposed to do; it highlights the artwork and helps to create a richer mood and story.

Tundra Publications recently purchased the rights to distribute a large number of European works in the American market for the first time. *Margot in Badtown* is the first one of these—good choice.

Margot in Badtown is the story of a big woman from a little town finding a little niche in a big town. Written by New York native Jerome Charyn, he tells the life of Margot, a woman from the city of Prairie Dog, Texas, who has dreams of being an actress on Broadway. So against the advice of her family and fiance, she packs up one night and moves to New York to make it on the footlights. Once she gets in New York though, she realizes just how small Prairie Dog is, and just how much of a dream she had as she encounters everything from a shifty landlord to a crazy agent. Then she finds her place in the city—a part of a seedy crew.

Margot in Badtown has all of the qualities of the legends of Robin Hood mixed with the absurdities qualities of a French Truffaut film. Margot is never overcome by her obstacles, but rather encouraged by the hardships that come before her, and moved until she becomes the inspiration for others. The one thing that Margot's life remains constant—she never leaves a small town; at one point a visitor from Prairie Dog asks her if she ever gets out of the small corner of Manhattan that she lives in, and she replies, "This is all the Manhattan you'll ever need."

When I first read this book, I remarked to you that it had the same stylistic feel as the film *After Hours*, which is one of my favorite films. Both *After Hours* and Margot in Badtown emphasize an undercurrent of the surreal that can be found in any large city and I love the strangeness such an approach conveys. If you analyze it as a work of realism, you'll be sadly disappointed; if, however, you take what Charyn and

Frezzato throw at you and go with it, you'll see just how much fun this book can be. It has a jerky, episodic quality, and you don't always see how the story gets from point A to point B, but that works suitably well with the atmosphere of the book.

Now, let me say this, most artists wish they could paint half as well as Massimiliano Frezzato. No matter how much you may enjoy the story of *Margot in Badtown*, you will love the art. Strong figures live on every page of *Margot*, in a town that is always highly detailed and honest. There are no holds barred in this book, and the artist tells every tale with clear, glorious detail. The idea of having you will love the art. Strong figures live on every page of *Margot*, in a town that is always highly detailed and honest. There are no holds barred in this book, and the artist tells every tale with clear, glorious detail. The idea of having

H.P. Lovecraft's strongest literary quality was his ability to communicate alienation; while Lovecraft's protagonists were faced with beings and horrors unlikely anything they had ever known, it was always clear to HPL's readers that those heroes were only slightly more comfortable in human company. They were loners, isolated beings who seemed caught between two worlds.

To the casual reader, H.P. Lovecraft's concepts are the most memorable component of his stories. Cthulhu, the Elder Gods, Nyarlathotep, the Necronomicon—these are almost archetypal concepts, and their

ROB LIE

HUMPH

THE GENERATION HEROES

Q from produ FEBRUARY



Tundra Publications recently purchased the rights to distribute a large number of European works in the American market for the first time. *Margot in Badtown* is the first one of these—good choice.

Margot in Badtown is the story of a big woman from a little town finding a little niche in a big town. Written by New York native Jerome Charyn, he tells the life of Margot, a woman from the city of Prairie Dog, Texas, who has dreams of being an actress on Broadway. So against the advice of her family and fiance, she packs up one night and moves to New York to make it on the footlights. Once she gets in New York though, she realizes just how small Prairie Dog is, and just how much of a dream she had as she encounters everything from a shifty landlord to a crazy agent. Then she finds her place in the city—a part of a seedy crew.

Margot in Badtown has all of the qualities of the legends of Robin Hood mixed with the absurdities qualities of a French Truffaut film. Margot is never overcome by her obstacles, but rather encouraged by the hardships that come before her, and moved until she becomes the inspiration for others. The one thing that Margot's life remains constant—she never leaves a small town; at one point a visitor from Prairie Dog asks her if she ever gets out of the small corner of Manhattan that she lives in, and she replies, "This is all the Manhattan you'll ever need."

When I first read this book, I remarked to you that it had the same stylistic feel as the film *After Hours*, which is one of my favorite films. Both *After Hours* and Margot in Badtown emphasize an undercurrent of the surreal that can be found in any large city and I love the strangeness such an approach conveys. If you analyze it as a work of realism, you'll be sadly disappointed; if, however, you take what Charyn and



surface strength often captivates readers to such a degree that they never delve beneath the surface of the story to find the deeper themes.

Millennium's H.P. Lovecraft's *Cthulhu* is a book that will please those who enjoy Lovecraft's concepts as well as those who appreciate the attitudes behind them. The frame story emphasizes the alien horror of Cthulhu and those who hope to bring him and his minions to Earth again; the adaptation of "The Whisperer In Darkness" focuses on the isolation in a well-crafted adaptation of Lovecraft's compelling tale. Those who wanted to see more of Mark Ellis' update-

ing of the Cthulhu Mythos will be a bit disappointed that the framing sequence isn't longer—but the story adaptation by Terry Collins is so well done that they certainly won't be displeased with the book. You certainly don't miss anything in this book. It provides the modern action/adventure storyline that will help modern readers maintain interest, and the more subtle tale of intrusion and personal horror that will keep intrigue fans glued to the book. As always with Lovecraft, there is far more going on than meets the eye, and I am curious to see how Ellis will tie together all of the framing sequences and see how the classic Lovecraft tales that are

going to be adapted into this book. Hey! He's already got one reader hooked...

Lovecraft's horror isn't the modern, gore-filled horror of Clive Barker, nor is it the brutally ironic horror of EC Comics; Millennium should be praised for resisting any urge to reinterpret HPL in these styles, as others have often done.

Robert Lewis and Marcus Rolle do an adequate job illustrating "The Whisperer In Darkness," but they have a tough act to follow. Daryl Banks' art for the framing sequence is superb, so visually dynamic that I predict you'll be seeing his name in the credits of a

major comic in the next few years.

Banks' art has gotten better and better with everything he's done. This storyline seems to highlight some of the things that Banks seems so good at: alien culture and action. I can't help but feel that you almost sell Terry Collins a little short, though. His crafting of the characters and their actions made it clear to me that something odd was occurring before it was revealed in the story—such a subtle task is no easy feat.

Lovecraft's Cthulhu has a great deal going for it, and I'm willing to bet that this is may be the first successful Lovecraft project in the comics medium, which has found Lovecraft's essence very elusive thus far.

Valiant Comics may be the hottest company on the market today. With the smash success of *Magnus, Solar, Harbinger*, and *X-O*, it only seems natural for their products to be well crafted. Therefore, it should be no surprise that *Shadowman* is so very good.

Shadowman is the new ongoing title by Steve Englehart and David Lapham, and it tells the story of a young jazz musician in the city of New Orleans. *Shadowman* is also a story of the supernatural and strange goings-on of the night in the old and dangerous city of New Orleans. The title character in *Shadowman* is Jack Boniface, a free-form jazz musician who finds out that the night holds many secrets from him—some of which are dangerous to know. The first is a beautiful young woman named Lydia, and the second is a mask left lying in the gutter...

So do you get the feeling that Steve Englehart is a jazz fan? Some works utilize a music form in such a way that you really get the feeling that their knowledge of the work is entirely vacuous; quite the contrary, it seems that Englehart avidly listens to jazz and has some idea how it is performed and created. It adds nice touch to the story.

Englehart is one of the long time masters of the comic book tale, and this shows in *Shadowman*. He knows what motivates a reader to continue—what to tell and what to leave out. This works wonderfully on a book like *Shadowman*, where no one is exactly sure what is happening—especially Jack Boniface. While the reader is given certain information that might escape the character, you always feel like you're only one step ahead, and sometimes not even that—there is always that undying sense of mystery.

While I felt like a few parts of the ending of the first issue were a bit rushed, I nonetheless enjoyed this "origin tale" and the view of New Orleans that Englehart presents. New Orleans has an almost irresistible lure for many writers—and the city itself is so diverse that it can effectively serve as a backdrop for almost any sort of story. Englehart conveys its mystery and intrigue quite well.

The art is by David Lapham, who came to notice on *Magnus: Robot Fighter*, and if anything, he's gotten better. *Valiant* is one of the few companies in existence that seems to have something of a "house style," and that would bother me except that it is so darn good. Every *Valiant* book has the same strong quality of artwork from issue to issue and from title to title. You always know what to expect, and you'll never be let down. David Lapham exemplifies that style; his work is so clean and clear that you wonder why you haven't been seeing this guy's work for years. The only variation with *Shadowman* seems almost obvious—it's darker in tone. There is more of a mood to each page; more of a sense of impending doom and darkness. And on a book whose idea is the dark-er side of night, that's a good thing.

The first time I read *Shadowman*, I didn't even realize that this was the same artist who had worked on *Magnus, Solar*, and *Harbinger*. This face of his work is the most pleasing I've seen; I hope he continues to work in this style.

Valiant is fast becoming the company that the other guys have to watch out for, and with quality like *Shadowman*, it isn't an unwarranted fear.

Now let's head out of New Orleans' city limits and venture into Louisiana's swamps and bayous... It's rare when the only criticism you can make of a comic book is that the writer packs in so many good ideas that you wish more space had been devoted to each of them. That's the only criticism I have of Nancy Collins' *Swamp Thing* #18; there are so many significant plot developments in here that Collins could have been given twice as many pages to work in and it still would have wanted more.

While Teela's and Swamp Thing's daughter, has reached a nexus in her life, her potentially destructive powers are coming to the fore, and Swamp Thing and Abby aren't sure how to help her control them. Even the Parliament of Trees seems at first unable—or perhaps unwilling—to offer suggestions.

While Teela is at a turning point in terms of her powers, she also seems to be undergoing a crucial personal transition. In an eerie opening sequence filled with twisted images of Peter Pan, Sugar and Spike, the Wizard of Oz, the Muppets, and many other children's works, Teela—and the readers—are given a disturbing premonition of danger to come. As you



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VALIBU COMICS

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JANUARY 1992

Swamp Thing

might expect, the foreshadowed danger arrives before the story is over, in the form of one of today's most frightening urban monsters...

The story is superb; it seems that Collins is giving *Swamp Thing* a direction that it has lacked for far too long.

It is amazing to me the number of different directions and tones that his title has had over the years. Wein and Wrightson, Moore and Telleken and Bissette, Rick Veitch—all of these outstanding talents have brought this character to life, and yet it's Nancy Collins' work that has me talking right now. The chance to compare her to others seems almost unavoidable, but I don't make that comparison—because there really isn't one. *Swamp Thing* is one of the most unique and entertaining books on the market, constantly offering intelligent, written and thoughtful stories that draw me in as a reader so deeply that I lose myself, and I lose the past. I can't compare Collins' *Swamp Thing* to previous incarnations, no matter how good they were, because this one is so strong. This isn't some other time this is Nancy Collins' version of *Swamp Thing* and it deserves the right to stand on its own.

I find it far easier to compare Collins' *Swamp Thing* to the tone of her own horror novels. I'm glad she doesn't feel like she has to prove what was done before, because now she's giving readers a chance to see what she does best.

Those of you who need a special reason to give new attention to a long-running title like *Swamp Thing* can pick this one up to admire the artwork of new illustrator Scott Eaton. His linework harkens back to the days of John Totleben and Steve Bissette, and that's certainly good news to *Swamp Thing* fans who remember that as the book's second artistic age of glory (after Wrightson's trendsetting original works on *Swamp Thing*, of course), Eaton seems much more at home here than on *Dr. Fate*, where his style didn't seem as well suited to the material. He also works very well with *Swamp Thing* writer Kim DeMulder, bringing out the best elements of both artist's work.

*The art has been the only thing that I feel has put off some readers from *Swamp Thing* lately—not because it was bad, but just because that it was inconsistent; you never knew who was going to be working on the next issue. Now that they have a regular artist especially a regular as good as Scott Eaton, *Swamp Thing* should be finding its way home with more and more readers.*

Collins hasn't attracted the following of Alan Moore yet, but it'll come—provided DC can keep her on *Swamp Thing*. Since she's already a successful novelist with three acclaimed horror novels to her credit, her work in comics is obviously labor of love—and I hope she's keeping loving what she's doing for a good while to come.

As long as we're talking about horror, let's talk

Creepy...

Many of you will remember *Creepy* as the horror anthology that was so popular in the seventies; well, it's back, although this time in a slightly different form. Like the recently revived *Vampirella*, *Creepy* is a new comic book mini-series from Harris Publications in conjunction with Dark Horse. There is one other thing that is slightly different about *Creepy*—it has a plot. Yes, a plot. One that ties together all of the different horror stories that appear in the magazine. Your old friend Uncle Creepy is back—only this time, he interacts with the people in the stories, becoming host for this book in more than just one way.

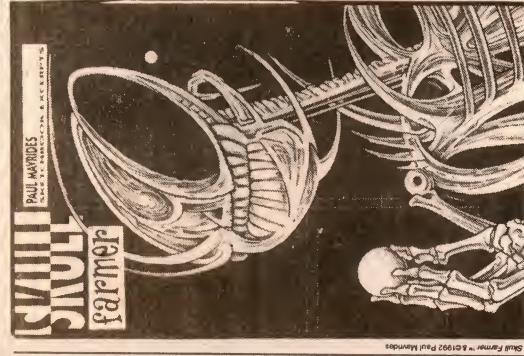
The central plot is by Peter David with art by Keiron Dwyer and Tom Sutton, and it involves a gathering of souls in a spooky house at the end of the road—all of which are carrying an identical ring. Each of these guests experience a personal horror brought to you by some of the top names in comics, including Gene Colan, James Fry, Jo Duffy, and Steve Leialoha.

This sort of microcosmic frame has been a long-standing literary tradition—and I think it works in no genre as well as it does in horror. Each person has different fears, and this structure allows us to see the differences and how our fears appear to those who don't share them.

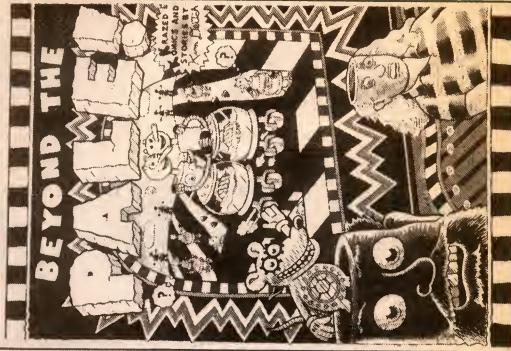
This new format for *Creepy* works very well. The stories are tight and crisp, and fit easily into the overall plot of the book. You never feel as though the creativity is being stretched too far, and this structure allows us to see the person for that thing that just went bamm. While I suspect that many fans will find themselves more attracted to *Vampirella* than to *Creepy* (after all, this is a medium in which cheesecake sells very well), I much prefer this sort of story. Since the title character is merely an observer, not a focal element of the action, the reader finds it difficult to predict what will happen next—and that's certainly a plus in effectively frightening or disturbing the reader. And I grew tired of the clever horror host long before HBO wore this cliché out in tales From the Crypt, so I'm pleased to see Uncle Creepy actually have an active role in this story. I can see this series going far beyond its first four-issue run...

**Creepy**

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